

AUDIENCE REACH

AFGHANISTAN

65.7%

PALESTINIAN
TERRITORIES

50.2%

MOROCCO

10.8%

BOSNIA

23.2%

KOSOVO

31.0%

NIGERIA

33.2%

According to recent surveys
commissioned by USAGM

Countering Violent Extremism

Extremist groups such as ISIS, Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab, and Al-Qaeda restrict access to information, instill fear, intimidate local populations, and propagate disinformation. They also invest heavily in state-of-the-art misinformation campaigns, sophisticated media production skills, and social media engagement to dominate regional discourse and push their own narrative.



MBN reporter Newroz Roso in Syria.

USAGM'S OBJECTIVES

U.S. Agency for Global Media's (USAGM) approach to countering violent extremism (CVE) is grounded in its mission and role as an independent public service media organization. USAGM's programming provides vulnerable communities — especially young people — with comprehensive and objective information, making them less vulnerable to violent extremist propaganda.

USAGM's networks work together to counter violent extremism through programming efforts that expose the harm of radicalization, build resilience within communities, encourage dialogue and participation, establish platforms where all voices can be heard, and disrupt extremist narratives through credible, fact-based journalism. USAGM's networks and language services cover violent extremism as a news topic, but they also work to engage and connect audiences, getting at some of the root causes of extremism — poverty, disenfranchisement, and the sense of voicelessness and marginalization.

To be effective in this context, USAGM's networks rely on credibility with audiences, built through proactive, long-term presence; consistent engagement and avenues for discussion; and a broad range of programming options.

IMPACT

USAGM reaches large audiences in many areas subject to extremist influence. Even after the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan, USAGM's networks reached nearly 66% of mobile phone-owning adults in June 2022. In Nigeria, they reach one in three adults, and an even larger percentage of Hausa-speakers, who largely reside in the northern region of the country under the greatest threat from Boko Haram. USAGM is also reaching out to other vulnerable populations, such as Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, to fill the vacuum for news and information.

MIDDLE EAST BROADCASTING NETWORKS

MBN broadcasts in Arabic throughout the Middle East and North Africa, including areas that are the hardest hit by violent extremism. Through television, radio, and digital platforms, MBN presents accurate and unbiased news to millions of people each day. In addition to more than 12 hours of news daily, MBN produces original television, radio, and digital programs that counter extremist ideology and are dedicated to empowering women, defending free speech, and encouraging ethnic and religious tolerance. MBN's original debate shows constructively address the political, economic, social, and cultural issues that drive the spread of extremism in Iraq, Syria, and beyond.

MBN regularly covers sensitive topics not found on other Arabic media outlets (e.g. political Islam, jihadism, freedom of expression, and religion) and engages

audiences to join the discussion. MBN features expert analysis, including religious scholars who challenge extreme interpretations of Islam and encourages critical thinking and analytical debate. MBN programs and reports focus on the root causes of extremism and explore solutions to issues such as unemployment, marginalization, political exclusion, and repression by the state. Additionally, MBN highlights stories of building bridges between different communities and religions.



Alhurra program "\$2" addresses the root causes of extremism.

The Raise Your Voice digital platform advocates for human rights, celebrates small victories, and counters extremism of all types. It encourages young people in Iraq and the Levant to explore and engage in open discussions on the causes and consequences of violent extremism and intolerance, including topics such as religious freedom and minority rights. Several of MBN's programs address the root causes of extremism, including Alhurra's "\$2," which examines the economic and social challenges facing much of the Middle East — especially poverty — as a driver for radicalization and recruitment of young adults by extremist organizations, and what is being done to address this trend. "Alhurra Investigates" uncovers issues that are considered too sensitive by the local media, while "Did It Really Happen?" counters dis- and misinformation being used to spread extremist rhetoric.

VOICE OF AMERICA

VOA leverages its global reach to address the full scope of threats, while providing audiences vulnerable to extremism in South and Central Asia, Africa, and Eurasia with critical information.

Services in VOA's South and Central Asia Division broadcast to regions heavily impacted by the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda, as well as other terrorist groups, reaching out to young people and women on social media, examining lives lost or interrupted by extremism. On the front lines in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, and the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, VOA reporters brave many security risks to provide an accurate picture of the situation on the ground. In 2023, VOA restored medium wave (AM) radio broadcasts to Afghanistan and NW Pakistan after the Taliban cut off access to transmitters in the country. Additionally, VOA continues to grow its 24/7 direct-to-home satellite television channel for Afghanistan, which carries uncensored news and information in both Pashto and Dari. VOA's Pakistan-focused, Pashto-language Deewa Service maintains a section on its website on "IS and Extremism" and has created new programming to raise awareness of women's issues and a new music program to draw younger viewers to its satellite stream.



VOA's Ayesha Tanzeem reporting from Afghanistan.



VOA Deewa's radio on television show reaches audiences in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region.

VOA's Urdu service, which delivers programming on TV, radio, and digital, considers countering extremism a core objective. The service's TV show "View 360" responds to extremist activity related to blasphemy laws, which carry a potential death sentence for anyone who insults Islam and which some say have been used by hardliners to unfairly target minorities or persecute minority faiths. The show

counters this restriction on free speech, separating fact from fiction and creating awareness about needed legal and societal changes. On the first anniversary of the Taliban's takeover of Kabul, VOA Urdu produced a special show on the Taliban's extremist views and their effect on the lives of average Afghans over the previous twelve months. Furthermore, the service's digital show, "Ain Mutabiq," exposes how the extremist ideology prevalent in the region is making women's lives difficult.

VOA's Africa Division provides public service programming in countries and regions destabilized by violent extremist groups including Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab, and other Islamist insurgents. In 2022, the Africa Division produced a well-received documentary, "Escaping Cabo Delgado's Nightmare,"



With abductions and violent attacks rampant in northern Nigeria, local communities take a active role in their own security. VOA Hausa covers this protest against violence in Southern Kaduna.

capturing the effects of the insurgency that has forced nearly a million people out of their homes in northern Mozambique. VOA's fast-paced youth-oriented programs in Hausa ("Taskar VOA" and "Yau Da Gobe"), Somali ("Dhalinyarada Maanta") and Swahili ("VOA Express") continue to provide positive alternatives to extremism while exploring opportunities for entrepreneurship, education, and other options. And in Mali, VOA has expanded its Bambara-language programming to serve audiences in regions that have suffered as Islamist militants fought to obtain power.

VOA Eurasia Division's coverage of violent extremism focuses on the Balkan states, primarily Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, which lack the institutional capacity and resources to address the sources of radicalization and reintegrate repatriated foreign ISIS fighters and their families. VOA's coverage provides insights

and analysis regarding potential security challenges in the region, while informing audiences about U.S. assistance and investments in programs to prevent and counter violent extremism.

RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY

Even after the return of the Taliban, Radio Azadi (Afghanistan) and Radio Mashaal (Pakistan's tribal areas) are true public broadcasters reaching significant audiences in Dari and Pashto. While under significant pressure from the Taliban and extremist organizations, RFE/RL has reported on how radically life has changed since the Taliban's return for ordinary Afghans, particularly women, frequently airing their voices. To demonstrate community resilience as a tested strategy for countering violent extremism, both services have reported on public health initiatives like vaccination campaigns, provided emergency information in the aftermath of crises, and showcased practical, inclusive alternatives to extremist ideologies. Following terrorist attacks, Azadi and Mashaal usually profile victims and give a platform for their families to share their grief and remember.

As a result of their reporting on topics that local domestic media will not cover out of fear of violent retribution, RFE/RL journalists have been threatened, harassed, and even killed — most recently in November 2020, when Helmand correspondent Mohammad Ilyas Dayee was murdered in a targeted car bombing.

RFE/RL's five Central Asia services lead engagement with audience members and social media users on extremism-related topics, such as the radicalization of economic migrants in Russia and Europe and how prisons offer fertile ground for recruitment and radicalization. The Central Asian services are uniquely positioned to cover the regional, political, and security implications of violent extremist groups. RFE/RL's Central Asia Newswire provides objective news to media outlets in the region, which is ranked among the most restrictive media environments in the world.

In the Western Balkans, RFE/RL engages young and vulnerable audiences in conversations that explore the root causes of extremism and the effects of ethnic radicalization on their communities. RFE/RL's Balkan Service prioritizes coverage that explores the legacy of extremism and conflict in the region and refutes ongoing disinformation.



RFE/RL Balkan held several town halls with audiences in Bosnia as part of the "Not in My Name" campaign.



RADIO FREE ASIA/BENARNEWS

Through BenarNews, an online news portal launched in 2015, RFA engages underserved and vulnerable audiences in South and Southeast Asia with news and content in Bengali, Thai, Bahasa Malaysia, Bahasa Indonesia, and English.

Among the areas on which BenarNews focuses is Islamic militancy in South and Southeast Asia, reporting extensively on the movements that are still active there and the many conflicts that continue to sustain them. BenarNews also examines the political and socioeconomic factors that feed violent extremism, bringing objective reporting to places where local media tend to avoid these topics and helping hold authorities accountable.

BenarNews journalists were on the ground in Marawi city in the southern Philippines two days after Islamic State-linked militants seized it in May 2017 — and throughout the five-month battle to defeat them. BenarNews also interviewed Malaysians and Indonesians who joined the Islamic State in Syria, and their devastated family members. It tracked how Al-Qaeda's Southeast Asian affiliate, Jemaah Islamiyah, had recruited new members and grown wealthy during the past decade.



BenarNews covers the aftermath of the battle for Marawi in the Philippines.